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THE FLUTE-PLAYER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY FRANCIS HOWARD WILLIAMS

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BY

FRANCIS HOWARD WILLIAMS

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THE FLUTE-PLAYER.

THRICE a score of candles, flaring,
 Fashion shadows on the wall,
 While the loftier lights are glaring
 Over all the festival ;

All bravely flare
 the lights of the
 festal hall
 wherein the
 players begin
 the symphony.

With a visage melancholy
 Meditates the dark Bassoon,
 Glows the 'Cello's face as jolly
 As a yellow harvest-moon.

And albeit each
 one thinketh
 but of his own
 part, yet the
 wholeness of the
 symphony suf-
 fereth no mar-
 ring thereby ;

Lean the Oboë and eager,
 With a sharp, uplifted chin ;
 Bald and red, and seeming meagre
 In his brains, the first Violin ;

For, of a truth, it
 is here as with
 the music of
 humanity, to the
 which tho' all
 must contribute,
 many an one
 furnisheth a

note that is but a discord to that of his fellow.

But the Flute with shoulders bended
 And his scanty silvered head,—
 Ah ! what present joys are blended
 With the sorrows that are fled.

And one player
 thinketh but of
 being done with
 as small pain as
 may be, and
 another reckon-
 eth how he shall
 expend the wage

of his labor in rioting and wantonness.

Why, tho' haply he remembers
 Vanished gleams of Paradise,

But the Flute-
Player, who
sitteth well
stricken in
years, seemeth
to have learned
somewhat of the
secret of life,
even as a soul
that hath found
Truth in the
sweet shows of
Nature. So that
no sooner hath
the music begun,
than he seeth,
as it were by the
inner eye of the
spirit, himself a
lad.

Glow love's unextinguished embers
Deeply in his faded eyes ?

Strange that songs forever borrow
From the past their sweetest lay !
Strange that every silver morrow
Has a golden yesterday !

Strange ! the flutist, bowed and
slender,
Marks no more the bâton's lead,
As he breathes a message tender
Thro' his mild and mellow reed.

And the gay
Allegro
quickeneth his
pulses.

For the player in his dreaming
Sees himself again a boy,
Finding real all the seeming
Of life's sudden cup of joy ;

And full soon
he groweth
'ware of the
touch of man-
hood.

Hears the fretted music ringing
Down the corridors of art,
Hears love's voice eternal singing
Thro' the chambers of his heart ;

For his sweet-o'-
heart cometh
tripping adown
a green country
lane.

Feels a touch of tenderest meaning
Steal into his soul again,
As a maid o'er April greening
Saunters down a country lane ;

There is nothing to dissemble,
Naught to fear in love's behest,
Where the violets lie a-tremble
In the heaven of her breast.

And lo! she is
very fair to look
on, and her
gentle seeming
is as a balsam
to his eyes.

Is it but the morning's blessing
That the maiden looks so fair?
Is it but the warm caressing
Of the sunlight in her hair?

The Player
dallyeth with
the vision.

(Suddenly a dulcet blending
Of the strings and oboë
Marks the gay allegro's ending
In a flood of harmony.

Then cometh a
change in the
measure and he
awakeneth all
regretful
thereof.

Then in slow and solemn number
The adagio begins,
Fraught with harmonies that cumber
Gloriously the violins.)

But soon the
tardy Adagio
wooeth his spirit
again to dream.
And the
symphony goeth
well, and
forasmuch as all
the players obey
the wand of him
who leadeth, the
end thereof is
Beauty;
for verily
Obedience is
the gate to
Knowledge, and
Knowledge is
Truth, and
Truth is Beauty.

Haply some melodious motion,
Born of music's eloquence,
Lulls to slumber like a potion
Ravishing the spirit's sense;

For again the old Flute-Player
Dreams away o'er land and sea,
Idle as a sunburnt strayer
In the fields of Arcady.

The Flute-Player.

Yet the players
are sordid,
being but blind
followers,
wedded each to
his own husks.

There, within his vision standing,
Smiles the love of all his life,
Like a maiden bud expanding
To the flower he calls his wife.

And the stately, cadenced measure
Of the rich adagio,
Woven thro' remembered pleasure,
Woofed of half-forgotten woe,

And betimes
the aged
Flute-Player
seeth his
sweet-o'-heart ;

Comes with wisdom of the ages
Pulsing in its ebb and flow,
Laden with the lore of sages
From the land of Long-Ago.

Now become
his good-wife.

And a cottage in the sunlight
Sheds the glory of the sun,
Wherein magic, from his one light,
Many lights of love has won ;

And he heareth
the babble of
children in the
glow of the
ingle.

For the low voice of a woman,
Children's laughter, merry cries,
Come in tones divinely human
From an earthly Paradise.

And ere he well
knoweth, the
time hath pas't
to the ripe o' the
year, and
middle-age hath
come.

" Well I love them ! " in a broken
Whisper 'neath the murmurous trees ;
" Well I love them ! " partly spoken
Thro' the sympathetic keys.

“Is it better pain and pleasure
To remember or forget?
Is it—? Ah! they change the measure;
This is sure the minuet!”

And lo! he
starteth as the
measure of the
music changeth
to the stately
Minuet:

And the player all sedately
Scans his notes with eyesight worn,
While the movement lapses stately
As a breeze among the corn,

Till the tones a subtler meaning
Garner from the vanished years,
O'er life's fields of harvest gleaning
Aftermath of many tears.

Again the
pageant of his
dreams ariseth
before him, and
time, which ever
hasteth apace,
hath silvered
o'er his hair,
and corded his
faded hands
with great veins,
and dulled the
lustre of his
eyes.

Fleet before him evanescent
Seasons thro' their courses run,
Light as dewdrops iridescent
In the laughter of the sun;

And the robin of the ring-time
Learns to pipe a lovelier tune;
And the bride of early springtime
Is the sweeter wife of June.

Comes the warm, sun-soaked Septem-
ber,
Life's wine red upon the lees;
Comes the rimy-lipped November,
Children's children at his knees.

And it pleaseth
him well to
fancy that 't is
the laughter
of his
grandchildren

and their right
merry pother
that come unto
him from the
bars of the
lively Scherzo.

Onward, ever onward speeding,
What is this the old man sees ?
'T is the bâton deftly leading
Thro' the scherzo's harmonies.

.

Mayhap his
dream hath put
on the vestments
of reality.

Suddenly in tones supernal,
Earthward borne in lordlier rhyme,
Comes the boom of waves eternal,
Breaking on the sands of time.

For lo ! the
lights fade, and
from his ears the
sound of the
instruments
dieth away.

Whence the rapture in the gazing
Of the aged flutist's eyes ?
Whence the tenderness amazing
In the wedded harmonies ?

He seeth no
more the wand
of the leader.

Why should he, thro' every turning
Of the mellow symphony,
Play his single part, then spurning
All control, seem but to be

The clouds roll
asunder and
there cometh a
Divine beckon-
ing from the
firmament.

Fluting fast and ever faster
Thro' the music's crowded bars,
Led by a celestial master
Beating time among the stars ?

The Flute-
Player's ears
are ravish't with
vast harmonies
ineffable.

Ah ! he hears a cadence woven,
As a thread of song might be,
By a more divine Beethoven
Thro' a mightier symphony.

In his fading eyes the story
Of a life is written fair ;
O'er his brow a summer glory
Warms the winter in his hair.

And as down remembered valleys
Love and youth together stroll,
Thro' the flute's mellifluent alleys
He is breathing out his soul.

.

Struck with sudden admiration,
Falls the leader's nerveless hand ;
Conscious of divine elation,
All the men in wonder stand ;

And he breath-
eth a strange
melody through
his flute.
The tones grow
celestial, for lo !
the Flute-Player
is uttering his
soul, and it pass-
eth out divinely.

And all the
players stand
dumb, being
wrought upon
by a deep awe ;

In their eyes strange fires are burning ;
Each melodic voice is mute,
Save the pure impassioned yearning
Of the liquid-throated flute.

But the flute
continueth.

It is the Finalé.

Every movement has been rendered
Sanctified from days of yore,
All the instruments have tendered
Reverence to the glorious score.

And, of a truth,
may we not say
that 't is even so
in all of life ?
For albeit many
tones be blended
in harmony and
discord, yet 't is
the pleading of
the single voice
that reacheth to
the everlasting
ears.

All have mingled in the heaven
Born of wedded tone and tone ;
The finalé must be given
By the soulful flute alone.

Many men shall
mingle in the
world, but 't is
the naked soul
which must
come *alone* to
the altar-steps
of God,

Ay, the symphony, tho' blended
In accordance loud and long,
Sinks at last, when all is ended,
To the pleading of a song.

.

Still the candles, weirdly flaring,
Fashion shadows on the wall,
Still the loftier lights are glaring
Over all the festival.

The fluting
dieth into
silence.

Hark ! Is this a sigh or singing
Dying on the listening air ?
'T is the flute's voice, upward winging
Like a music-laden prayer.

The dead fingers
lie, loving, across
the keys.

And a hush in benediction
O'er the bended man is shed ;
Death that glorifies affliction
Wreathes an aureole 'round his
head.

The symphony
is finish't, but
its last chords
have been sound-
ed beyond the
stars.
'T is only the
Flute-Player
who hath heard
the final
harmony.

And his fingers still are pressing
Voiceless keys with loving art,
Still the silent flute caressing
On the silence of his heart.

TO BEAUTY: AN ODE.

I.

THERE comes a sure uplifting of the soul ;
Forth leaps a light late shadowed in eclipse ;
Before my seeking gaze the vapors roll
Backward, and bursts the new apocalypse !
In this large moment, Spirit of Beauty, thou
That dost possess me with thy loveliness,
I am elate to feel thee, know thee mine,
To wrap my being in the sense of joy
Which is thy being, till thou dost endow
My soul with love heroic and the stress
Of high endeavor. Life hath no alloy,
So touched upon by thee, but grows divine
In potency of action, power of nobleness.

II.

An hour of youth that dreams of no hereafter,
A day of toil amid encircling fears,
The comradeship of human loves and laughter,
The sanctifying grace of human tears ;
A weary waiting through the years that cumber,
A weary sowing that the world may reap,

A silent drooping of the head to slumber,
 A silent closing of the eyes to sleep.
 And this is life, which thy fair ministries
 Have made to me a dream of solemn joys,—
 In candid sunlight, with the somnolent bees,
 In glorious glooms of forest sacristies,
 In green recesses where the fret and noise
 Of the defeated, despicable world
 Come not to break the bliss of solitude.
 Ah ! beacon hurled
 From God's hand into trackless nights of
 mind,
 By thy fair light I find
 The hidden flaws of the philosophies,—
 The nerveless food
 Of earth-bred natures barren of the skies.

III.

What time the Spring had wantoned with the trees
 And wrought a pallor over Arcady,
 Thou camest to me robed as one might be
 Who ministered to Love's high revelries,
 And didst uplift me with thy starry eyes,
 Till I, divine in thy divinity,
 Encompassed heaven in being loved of thee,
 And drew from Paradise
 Delight to a sad world all rapturously.
 To touch thy hair the sun had quit the skies ;
 And joy upon thy brow had fallen on sleep,
 Being surfeited with sweets which still did keep
 The portals of thy uncompanioned lips ;

And in the woven cadence of thy sighs
I heard Love's song wherethrough light
laughter slips,—
Life's undertone that cannot choose but weep.
And I spread wide my arms, but thou wert gone;
Naught left but memory's mocking counterpart,—
The wafted fragrance of thy outblown hair,
Subtle as odors of the Summer's heart;
And in the lambent and unpeopled air
A vision fading as a dream at dawn.

IV.

Is it but Fancy that doth sometimes cheat
Our wayward pulses into quietude,—
A stern necessity of joy, a mood
Begotten of much yearning upon thee,
Spirit that bearest wings upon thy feet
And laurel on thy white unaging brows,—
Spirit of streams and woodland minstrelsy
And Art's high heritage that with faith endows
Lives else all incomplete?
I only know thou dost vouchsafe delight,
Born of the morning and the sweet-breath'd
night
And silent hills that lift their fronts to woo
The upper air's yet deeper silences,
The while the thoughtful twilight hovers nigh
To stay the fretting of the leaves, as who
Should murmur: "Peace a little, it is I,"
And ever in profounder whispers, "Peace";

The pale light fading from clear winnowed skies
As fleeting colors from the face of Fear ;
A bird-song that releases rhapsodies,
And dies into the lucent solitude
With such divine decadence, that I hear
Remembered music in an interlude
Of visions alien grown to unremembering eyes.

v.

And I shall never lose thee ; thou dost keep
Tryst with my soul.
In patins wrought of daisies on the meads,
In violets lifting scented lips to God,
Haply in songs that flood the aisles of sleep,
Upon the fretting of unceasing needs
I feel the soothing and the sure control
Of thy cool fingers. In each greening sod
Is written thy evangel, and the ways
Thy feet have trod
Are redolent of all fair flowers that are,
While in thy deep commemorative gaze
Peace lingers like an upward-pointing star.

THE INNER VISION.

WHERE the sky in sleep and silence dreams
 away the drowsy days,
And the sunlit spaces shimmer in the films of
 golden haze,
Great Antonio, he of Spezzia, slowly thro' the
 seasons wrought,
Striving ever to embody that which his profounder
 thought
Found elusive as a perfume, or the melody that
 dwells
(Heard thro' misty miles of distance,) in the pulses
 of the bells ;
Till at last the storied canvas in triumphant colors
 bore,
Perfect as a strain of music 'prisoned thus forever-
 more,
One fair form enfolded in the rare celestial light
 it wore.

Here, where fountains lightly lisp of love to roses
 leaning low,
Staunch in friendship, dwelt the kinsmen Valentine
 and Angelo ;
Valentine was brave and brawny, hot the blood
 within his veins ;

His the strength to show compassion to the weak-
ness it disdains ;
His the supple nerve and sinew, and the step which
lightly trod ;
His the shoulders of a hero and the temples of a
god.
But for Angelo the thoughtful, dreaming ever of a
goal,
Where eternal wreaths of laurel wait to crown the
victor soul,
Life was but the budding promise of a later, fairer
flower ;
Joy the prelude to an anthem ; love the folly of
an hour ;
Pride of strength the badge of weakness ; gentle-
ness the test of power.

So when wide the fame was bruited of Antonio's
matchless skill,
And the finished picture proved the triumph of
creative will,
These two, singly, looked upon its tender curve
and living line,
Gloried in its wealth of color, recognized the
touch divine,
Saw and loved and praised it, each to other, with
unstinted breath,
Saying, "'T is a thing immortal, Tonio was not
made for death !"
And as Valentine enkindled with the beauty and
the grace

Of the masterful creation, stirred his life to quicker
pace,
And the wild blood, in its flood-tide, painted
passion on his face.

"Ah!" he sighed, "what deeper rapture, in a
world grown gray with prayer,
Than to lose one's sense of being in the perfume of
her hair;

In one mad transcendent moment,—” Quick, with
hand uplifted high,

“Hold!” cried Angelo in pallor, “Stay thy word
of blasphemy!

By Our Lady’s gracious presence,” (here he crossed
himself in haste)

“Thou, tho’ more than friend or brother, shalt not
find mine ear debased

To the level of thy lewdness. Hath some Circe
turned us swine?

Is the world with dregs so drunken that it cannot
taste the wine?”

Then, hot flaming in his anger, “Thou art mad,”
quoth Valentine;

“Mad the word and mad the gesture; thou hast
o’er thy parchments bent

Till thy blood hath lost true color and thy flame of
life is spent;

Thou wouldst preach a stern evangel as our
holiest heritage,—

On youth’s fair unruffled forefront write the mes-
sages of age.

Is it sin to worship Beauty wheresoe'er its shrine
may be ?

Is it shame to wed the pulses of a wide humanity ?
Thou, mayhap, canst chant a pæan to the joys of
dead desire,

Since no Circe hath debased *thee* till thou darest to
admire

Fair and fatal Aphrodite, born of Foam and bred
of Fire !”

“What !” spake Angelo, uprising, “Aphrodite !
Heaven be kind !

Nay, 't is thou art mad of surety ; overfeeding dulls
thy mind ;

'T is Antonio's chiefest glory that his work bespeaks
his heart ;

He ne'er found in pagan harlots lips to lure the
kiss of Art.

That fair form upon his canvas is our Blessed
Lady, she

More divine for being human, earthlier for divinity.

In the false pride of thy power, thou hast scorned
to kiss the rod ;

Thou hast dared to flaunt thine offal in the very
face of God !

But enough ! Words fall to folly ; test of truth
alone is wise ;

'T is the master who shall tell us whether in those
radiant eyes

Gleams the fire of wanton Venus or the Virgin's
Paradise.”

So they strode with eager footsteps to the cool
pavilion where
Sat Antonio, grave, and aureoled in a wealth of
wintered hair ;—
Put before him all the quarrel which so deep their
souls had stirred ;
Vehemently questioned, then awaited his decisive
word.
As they ceased the master slowly lifted his prophetic eyes,
While a smile, half hid, betokened more of sadness
than surprise :
“ Ye, my sons, have yet to learn the deepest,
holiest truth in art ;
Each beholder sees before him only that which
fills his heart ;
Eyes anointed by the spirit’s finer touch to nobler
sight
Ever catch the dawn of angel faces through Cimmerian night ;
But to him whose soul is fettered in the meshes of
desire
Saints are satyrs tho’ the artist dip his brush in
living fire.
Thou, oh Angelo, hast pondered long on visions
heavenly fair,
Till the beautiful Madonna smiles upon thee everywhere ;
But for *thee*, my strong-thewed, lusty Valentine,
with heart of flame,

Thy luxurious Venus tempts thee till thy lips pronounce her name.
For the answer to your question, know, my sons,
ye both are wrong,
All the beauties on my canvas to humanity belong ;
Through the weary years I labored, seeking a
celestial sign,
Then I painted simply *Woman*, finding nothing
more divine.”
Here Antonio paused. In silence, heart to heart,
and hand to hand,
Stood the friends with lowered eyelids, humbler
each to understand ;
And their chastened ears grew conscious of the
callings of the sea,
Lighter than the lambent rumor of the wind across
the lea,—
Softer than the sunlight sleeping on the slopes of
Arcady.

RIZZIO.

(A FRAGMENT.)

HOLYROOD, March 9, 1566. A banquet table in disorder. At back, the Countess of Argyle, swooning in her chair. Grouped apart, their swords red with the blood of Rizzio, stand the lords Darnley, Morton, Ruthven, Lindsay, and George Douglass. Seated near the centre is Mary Stuart, leaning despairingly upon the table, her face buried in her hands. Rizzio, wounded unto death, is at her feet, clinging to her girdle and striving to reach her face.

Rizzio.

SEE how they stand apart, these lords, whose
hands
Have bungled i' the work, else had their points
Made me a cleaner exit. They mayhap,
Granting short shrift, would yet bestow a balm
To soothe the pang and poison of the end.
My Queen ! thy throat is stung to sudden flowers,
Tinct with strange colors new begot of love ;
May I not kiss thee on the mouth and eyes,
Seeing how sternly this gaunt foe denies
All quarter to the vanquished ?

Let me hear
 'The old, quick breathing, breaking to desire,
 'To lull the sense and turn the pulses mad.
 I am a penitent ; ah, gracious Love,
 Be thou my rosary, and let me tell
 My sins upon thy perfectness ; as here,
 Where shadows make a twilight of thy hair,
 I 've dared to feel myself a very god.
 Or here, reñascent in thy eyes, have dreamed
 'That no diviner beacon burns in heaven.
 O ! little mouth, half rounded to a song,—
 Swift shuddering with an indrawn lisp of love,
 My soul hath lost itself to compass thee
 And rues no whit the barter.

Mary.

Prithee peace !
 For God's love turn thy gaze to heaven.

Rizzio.

And so
 Gaze still, my Queen, on thee.
 Nay, nay, fear not ;
 The poisoned chalice destined to my lips
 Is sweeter that I drain it at thy feet.
 Ah ! the wounds rankle ! It will not be long,
 For see how gorgeous the cold stone hath grown
 In colors of my life

Mary.

Mother of pain !

Be thou compassionate . . .

Rizzio.

There were no need
To pray compassion did God please to grant
But one hour longer ; but the ebb hath set
Strong on the scarlet sea.

Cease weeping, Sweet,
Libations such as this become divine
In being offered.

Mary.

Ay. But on the same
Sad altar of my heart I lay a heart's
Petition. I, who brought a song from France,
Have heard but thunder from these Scottish hills,
And for the cates and dainties of delight
Have been made drunk with blood.

Sweet Heaven, hear
A prayer for justice, and endow the arm
Of him whose life is yet a part of mine
With puissance to right a hideous wrong.

Rizzio.

Nay, nay ; leave justice ; I would speak of love.

Rizzio.

Mary.

And love is justice.

Ah, poor clammy brows !
And kindly eyes that I have found so fair !
Would God a queen were not so poor a thing,
Beggared of easement to a friend

Rizzio.

But stoop

A little nearer till I feel thee through,
And catch life's light distilment spent like wine
Upon the lip's curve. So ! thine eyes are fires,
Quenched and relighted where the drooping lids
Turn gold to umber. Ah, yet nearer, Sweet ;
My lips are hot, but soon shall wed wet clay,
And grow less passionate when my mouth is filled
With pitiless earth.

Methinks, in faith, to ask
A hearing loverwise were little now,
For that the warmth of my embrace falls off
In touching Death.

Mary.

Nay, I am here, look up ;
Start not so wild !

Rizzio (brokenly).

The fragrance of thy breath
Fades to the faint remembrance of a joy
Too fine to linger.

Prithee,—speak more close,—
My ears are strangely dull,—and yet,—and yet
I hear the wrack of bursting worlds !

More close,—
God ! I am blind.—More close,—and guide my
hands
To find again thy face.

Ah, Heart of mine !
Death is so potent !—It is very dark,—
Night hath no stars.—

I drain this stirrup-cup
For love—and for the Queen !

(He clings to Mary's knees, and then rolls over upon the floor. George Douglass snatches Darnley's dagger, and, reaching across Mary's lap, drives it into the dead body of Rizzio.)

Douglass.

This for the King !

WOMAN-O'-THE-WATCH.

I.

A SLOPING stretch of beach that bore away
Monotonously northward, while beyond,
Across the glintings of a little bay
Indented in the coast-line, lay more beach
That feathered off to mist and lost itself
In indistinguishable haze of sand and sky.
Nearer, a reef that ever at low tide
Rose with bared head and looked askance to land
Like some poltroon detected in a lie ;
While over all there hung the neutral tints
Of a cool sea-sky, cumbered at its edge
With masses of gray cloud, and flecked across,
Nearer the zenith, with pale nimbus strips
That scudded to the South before the wind.
A path ran backward from the beach's edge,
Beginning at the place where the scant sedge
Made a path's presence visible, and thence,
Leading o'er bits of firmer ground, it wound
With indirect directness to the mill,—
The mill, a crazy tower with arms atop,
That caught a fragment of the untamed wind
And chained it to the bidding of the town.
Half a mile back the streaks of south-blown smoke,

Which left the cottage chimneys palely blue,
Whitened and faded, and in fading formed
The dim horizon's dusk.

Below, the shore
Grew bolder, and a little wharf was built,
Littered with anchors, nets, and half worn ropes,
And quaint, mysterious masses of hard hemp
Smelling of tar and salt. A sloop there was
That rode with lazy motion on the swell
And curtsied to the strand, while fishing-boats,
Bearing bright-blazoned titles 'thwart the sterns,
Bespoke the occupation of the town.

Now the slant shadows of the dipping masts
Tapered to spar-like spindles, long and lean
As nodding needles, for the day declined
And the flat-falling, low-reclining rays
Told that the time lacked but a transient hour
Of sunset.

Hence it was that silent steps
Which lately lingered on the yielding sand
Grew quicker,—steps of two whose threads of life
Seemed confluent : one a man with sun-browned
face,
Broad shouldered, heavy limbed ; not lacking
grace,
Yet of all grace unconscious ; such an one
As years of sea life might be looked to make :
The other a slight girl, with form as lithe
As willow, and her hair as full of lights
And deepening shadows as a forest stream.
And these two seemed intent on their one theme,

Unmindful of all else without the world
Which held their love, for they were to be wed
—God willing—on the morning of the day
Which brought another week, and even now
The man (Edward she called him) whispered low
Sweet sentences of what the future held,
—A waiting treasure-trove of untold joys,—
To fill her soul and his. So long, indeed,
Upon the unrestful bosom of the deep
He like a waif had wandered, that the thought
Of home and hearth and her he loved,—all his,—
Of tidy curtains drawn to half conceal
The Paradise within from him who stood
Without, perhaps the glow and hallowed light
Of childish faces pressed against the pane,
Seemed like a long-sought haven of repose
To over-weary hearts.

Such pictures now
He drew, while she, with quickening tumult filled,
Drank in his words and dared not lift her eyes
Lest, lifted, they betrayed more light of love
Than heart had faith to utter. Then he laughed
And said : “ It is not long—to-night I go
To gather store will ease the coming hours
Of our sweet honeymoon ; but I shall come
To thee again on Thursday,—mark the time,—
On Thursday ere the sun begin to sink.”
And full of happy hopes of that near day,
He sang in undertones an old love song,
Tender and quaint, sea-savoured, and withal
Melodious :

My love, my love, the tide is flowing
And slipping under our polished keel ;
My love, my love, the breeze is blowing,
And over the waves the red sun glowing
Tips the spars as they rock and reel.

But tide may flow,
And breeze may blow,
Yet love, my love !
While Heaven 's above
I am thine, love, I am thine !

Sweetheart, sweetheart, the wind is droning
And sighing sadly among the shrouds ;
Sweetheart, sweetheart, the timbers groaning
Sound i' the air like a spirit moaning
Under the gray of the angry clouds.

Let timbers groan,
And spirits moan,
But, sweetheart, sweet !
Tho' time fly fleet
Thou art mine, love, thou art mine !

And drawing closer that half drooping head
Till all its burnt gold saddened into brown
Under his shoulder's shadow, Edward led
Their steps close to the little wharf, and then,
Half-playful, half in earnest, drew from out
His rough sea-jacket's ample inner folds,
A curious scarf of brilliant-colored stuffs
Inwoven with much pain of cunning hand
Into quaint emblems, meaningless or not,

According to the power of him who sought
To find a meaning. All the colors, bright
As painted rainbows on a screen, quick caught
The eye, and thus had Edward, when he voyaged
In the last trading trip, seen at a booth
In some brisk Indian port this gewgaw which
He bought and carried home to please a whim
For brilliant hues. Now, drawing forth the scarf,
He held it to the girl and laughing cried :
“ This be the sign love’s duty first shall give
Of love’s own sweet remembrance ; fasten thou
This, as a flag, upon some bit of staff
From out the scattered rubbish of the beach,
And when, heart-hungered, I shall sail near home
On Thursday, ere the sun begin to sink,
There, first of all land signals which I see,
Shall be this emblem fretting in the wind
And painting all its length against the sky ;
And so my heart shall gather firmer strength
To stay its further waiting, and the sign
Will waft assurance over leagues of air,
Saying, “ Sweetheart, I wait, thy Ethel waits ;
Oh lover, husband, come ! ” And then he turned
Quickly to catch the blood upon her cheek
Which that last word had brought, for well he
knew
How surely it would bring it, and so leaned
And kissed her. And, ere either knew, they
reached
The wharf. There Edward, once more cautioning :
“ Forget not Thursday, ere the sun go down.”

And whispering that whereof no man may know,
Save that it drew a flood of tender light
Across the violet shadows of her eyes,
Turned from her and was gone, and Ethel stood
Still as a statue, looking out to sea,
The scarf of inwrought emblems in her hand,
And on her face emblems yet deeper wrought,
Till clear-cut cordage barred across the sun,
And he had sailed into the West.

II.

Time moves

With fateful fingers on the dial, and oft
Resteps in his old footprints ; so I came
To that same stretch of beach that bore away
Monotonously northward. Now there stood
A thriving, bustling town, compactly built
And cut with streets rectangular, and neat
As woodbine tacked against a cottage wall,
Whereon the eye rests, with a wish the while
To see it tangled and half lost in grass.
The path that forty years before had led
With indirect directness to the mill
Was blotted out and covered o'er with flag,
And at the place where once the wharf had been
Arose a ponderous pier, its space o'erpacked
With merchandise piled in long tiers and placed
In orderly confusion. Out beyond,
A goodly show of shipping, taut and trim,
Spoke of the commerce of the little port,

And led the eye to wander, as did mine,
Seeking the farther limits of the view
Half hid in haze. But soon, as though a spell,
Wielded by some resistless outer force,
Had fallen upon me, motionless I gazed
Upon a single object, wan and weird
As troubled dreams at dawn. There, in relief,
Sharp drawn against the background of the sky,
I saw the figure of a woman, tall,
But bent as with the weight of added years,
Stand peering out o'er misty miles of sea,
As though between the dull red vapor globe
Which marked the sun's position and herself
She looked to see some vision of a god
Float landward with the tide. Her left hand held
A slender rod, from whose half-splintered top
Fluttered a rag, flag-fashion, flapping hard
To rush away upon the gusty wind,
While with the right she shaded well her brow,
Nor seemed to know of aught without that space
Of sea and sky whereon her gaze was set.
And as I paused, regarding closer yet
That strange, quaint figure, close to where I stood
There passed a waterman, with slouching gait,
Who whistled a quick-changing sailor tune,
Full of queer grace-notes and untuneful trills,
That broke the current of my thought, and him
I beckoned, and, as being one who knew
The local gossip of the port, I begged
That I might learn who the wan woman was
That stood so still facing the wind. And he,

Half doubting if the question asked were asked
In jest or earnest, raised his brows and smiled
That it were asked at all.

“I thought,” he said,
“That all who ever came here knew the tale
Of *Woman-o'-the-Watch* ! Why there she stands
Where she has stood once every week for more
Than forty years. I mind me of the times
When I, a lisping child playing among
The anchors and the nets, saw that same hand
Uphold that same split flag-staff, and those eyes
Look out to sea with that same longing look.
Master, I think I be full come to years
Of manhood, and that woman stood as now
Ere I was born.”

And here he paused, with arm
Outstretched, pointing his words with gesture.

Then

Reflectively, as one who conjured up
Remembrances of childhood, he went on :
“I oft have heard my father tell the tale
How that old Ethel (she who stands there now)
Once on a time was deemed as fair a lass
As sailor's heart could pine for, and that when
One loved her and had won her love as well,
And they were to be wed, he that she loved
Had left her to be gone but half a week,
For he was, like the rest, a fisherman,
And thought to swell his store by one more trial
Against their coming marriage. But or e'er
Two days had marked his going there arose

A tempest such as those whose frosted heads
First saw the sunlight on this coast had ne'er
Before beheld—a tempest wild as war
And pitiless as death.

“ Full well all knew

No fishing boat could live in such a sea,
And those whose fathers, husbands, brothers, sons,
Were out, like stricken deer, rushed up and down,
Some raving, others praying, and all wild ;
The women wrung their hands and wept, save one
(This one before us), who stood cold and white,
And never spake a word. The long night through
She seemed like some stone sculpture of despair
Or terror turned to ice. And when the day
Broke she was left like some dismantled barque,
Her eye despoiled of lustre, and across
Her sweet brow written nothingness. Her wits
Had gone out in the darkness of that night,
And naught was left but love.

“ Thus sore bereft,

She, as it were, became a little child,
Pleased with a plaything, frightened by a frown ;
And even as a little child will find
In the same toy which yesterday beguiled,
Another toy quite fresh and new to-day,
To tire of now and want again to-morrow ;
So Ethel, with all ideas lost save one,
Because her lover, ere he went away,
Had bade her look on Thursday for his sail,
Has kept her curious calendar encased
Within her heart of heart, forgetful as

Each Thursday's sun goes down that Thursday's sun
Has risen. Thus each week for forty years,
Like a wan worshipper at a sacred shrine,
She comes on Thursday ere the sun goes down,
Unfurling her poor pennon to the breeze
Upon the pier. She never fails, and so
The sailors call her *Woman-o'-the-Watch*.
That, master, is her story."

As the man
Finished, we came quite close to where she stood
(For we had walked the while he told the tale),
And I regarded well those far-off eyes,
Seeking their solemn secret. O'er her face
There glowed a strange flush, centering in the
cheeks,
Which told of lying hope,—hope long deferred
And feeding on itself. Her hair, outblown,
Was nearly white, and all her figure seemed
But an embodied dream. Then, as the sea
Brake far adown the shore,—a harmony
Of fast incoming tides,—I heard her sing,
In tones so weakened with o'er-freighted days
The melody seemed drowned in half-spent tears :

"My love, my love, the tide is flowing
And slipping under our polished keel ;
My love, my love, the breeze is blowing,
And over the waves the red sun glowing
Tips the spars as they rock and reel.
But tide may flow,
And breeze may blow,

Yet love, my love !
While Heaven 's above
I am thine, love, I am thine ! ”

And I, who watched her closely, saw the light—
The strange perennial light of those sad eyes—
Flame dully, as a dying ember flames,
And half athwart her visage stole a smile
More pitiful than weeping, and anon
The eager tension of the muscles drew
The anxious look into her face again,
And she was once more peering out to sea
Silent as stone. But still the restless deep
In minor chords its requiem rolled abroad,
And once again she sang :

“ Sweet-heart, sweet-heart,—”

There the voice broke and faltered for a space,
As a dim memory of the shipwrecked mind
Stung the hurt heart to anguish, but ere long
She seemed upborne by some supernal force
That stirred the slumbering fires of her soul
And gave her youth and beauty. Once again
Erect she stood, her eye far-flashing with
The light of old, her form, remoulded, drawn
In gracefuller curves against the leaden sky.
The wind, which came in wet gusts from the sea,
Tore at her skirts and wrappings, and again,
Tugging with baffled malice at the flag,—
The poor, frayed rag whose emblems, once in-
wrought,

Had wept themselves to whiteness in the storms
Of forty years,—howled yet intent to drown
All voices save its own. Yet still her tones
Upswelled, defiant with their new-found strength ;
Her blood coursed quickly and the breath of youth
Came to her lips, and so the melody
Bore forth the words of that old, tender song,
Like the triumphant cry of him who fights
And conquers all :

“ Sweet-heart, sweet-heart, the wind is droning
And sighing sadly among the shrouds :
Sweet-heart, sweet-heart, the timbers groaning
Sound i’ the air like a spirit moaning
Under the gray of the angry clouds.
Let timbers groan,
And spirits moan,
But, sweet-heart, sweet !
Tho’ time fly fleet
Thou art mine, love, thou art mine ! ”

The strain rose glorified as though it held
A love outlasting death, and backward hurled
Defiance to the moth and rust of time !
Rose as that wondrous cry, triumphant, yet
So tender, which of old broke on the ears
Of Thracian women as they looked upon
The trunkless head of Orpheus, rushing on
Adown the tide of Hebrus,—that wild cry :
“ Eurydice, Eurydice, my own ! ”
Then, as she finished, all her new-found fire
Faded and sank as sank the setting sun ;

And I turned sadly. And the woman stood
There in the deep'ning twilight.

Now the wind
Rose to a gale, and ere, with hasten'd steps;
I reached the nearer edges of the town,
Swirled the dry sand in circles, and anon
Broke 'round the angles into wails of woe ;
Yet once—but for a moment—bore along,
As it had been the fragment of a song,
Sung in the rhythm of another sphere,
A dying cadence, sad as falling leaves :

“Sweet-heart, sweet-heart,—”

And then the mad wind veered,
And I heard nothing save its own wild chords
And the low sobs of the eternal sea.

MAGDALENE.

I.

THERE is a headland that o'erlooks the West
And on its forehead at each set of sun
Takes the warm farewell kisses of the day.
A windmill, too, with empty arms that plead
In desolation, widowed of the wind ;
And long unused stones, grown granulous,
As though the petulance of age and dearth
Cankered their disposition.

Half adown
The sloping hillside, walled from careless feet
And all the mild mutations of the field,
Stands in its sanctity a little plot
Set off forever to the silent dead,—
The beautiful, wise dead,—and here in peace
Sleep generations dreaming of the sun,—
The footsore travellers of the island town
Who rest and wait the morrow.

Faring once
Across the headland, down the hillside, I
Came to this warm God's acre, and drew near,
Reading, as one who cons remembered lore,
The brief memorials cut in cumbering stone,

The names of men revered and women loved,
Of children broken even as unopened buds
From stems that never healed them of the hurt,
Of kindred honored and friends gone before.
The headstones stood like sculptured sentinels
Anticipant in posture. One there was,
Partly in shadow of the loving grass,
Which drew my gaze by its elusive spell
And struck me into wonder. Over half
The legend-bearing stone the moss had grown,
Weaving a green, impenetrable veil,
And lichen, closer clinging than doth cling
Love's lips to lips that falter a farewell,
Covered it deeper into mystery.
So stood the tablet, bearing to the light
One half a history, while the shrouding bloom
Of reticent nature blotted out the rest.
I read a name, *Honorio*. To the right
A fair sunlit inscription. To the left
Naught but the masking greenery.

II.

So I came
And knelt before the cryptic stone, and bent
The sunburnt grasses back, and read the clear
Uncovered story of the sleeper :

“ Here
Lies one whose hands were wrought to sacrifice ;
She visited the poor ; she served the sick ;
She did the Christ's work in a weary world.”

Then I, with heart that knew the weight of tears
And ever a haunting sense of life's strange coil,
With mine own soul communed : "In very truth
This woman was as one elect of God."

And yet the moss-grown riddle was unread ;
What message 'neath that mantle should I find ?
Wherefore this mutilated epitaph,
This tribute marred of half its meaning, blurred
To imperfection by the touch of Time ?

I stooped and painfully sought how to force
The moss and lichen from their stony soil ;
I clave the uprooted tendrils, piece by piece,
And tore the green delights whose cool caress
Lay like a storied palimpsest. Yet still
Those firm fond fingers of a dryad maid
Clung to the stone as love to life, and I
Won with hard toil a letter, then a word,
Wringing from weeping Nature what she held
In sacred trust of secrecy, and so
Filching a sentence from her shielding hand
In characters tear-stained to darker hue,—
The record of a maiméd life :

"She loved

Nor well nor wisely, and fell off apace,
And lived, alas ! unfaithful to her vows."

III.

Over the headland grieved the cadenced wind,
And fell among the grasses, and died off ;
A little ghost of perfume from a rose

That nestled to the shelter of the mounds,
Touched me like spiritual fingers.

May not, then,
The sense of human justice be appeased,
That thus it graves a frailty into stone?
Honor, that hast ministered to need
And heard the low voice of the Nazarene,
Why has thy brother blazoned here thy sin?
For this thy tomb thy noble deeds alone
Were fitting record. Nature's mercy knows
More than man's rigor dreams of, and has woven
Her careful web o'er his impeachment; ay,
Even in thy fall, Honor, thou hast found
The kiss of God upon thy ruined brow.

I climbed the hillside where the windmill stands
With pleading arms; no sails, lateen and lank,
Shall ever again entice the breeze to sing
Light-hearted at its work; and yet I thought
There came a whispered promise on the air
That loitered mid the field flowers, voluble:
"Much is forgiven, for she loved much."

And all the warm gold of the setting sun
Hallowed the headland that o'erlooks the West.

NANTUCKET.

THE WOOD ROBIN.

DEEP in the hooded aisles,
Green-gloomed recesses,
Where solitude beguiles
My mobled grief to smiles,
And half expresses
Dreams of song-music mystically sung ;
As one who bows to share
The benison of prayer,
My soul confesses
Madness in melody like fragrance flung
Fair over bloomy miles.

What art thou that canst bring
Such sweet nepenthe,
That I, who hear thee sing,
Elated, seem to wing
To Him who sent thee,
Far thro' the lustrate and spacious sky ?
How from thy dulcet throat
Distillest thou the note
Delight hath lent thee
To ravish hearts till lips forget to sigh,
Lost in thy carolling ?

From collied depths of trees,
In rhythmic motion,
Thy quavering gospel frees
Lays liquid as the seas
Sing to the ocean—
Or leaves list in the whisper of the rain.
Messiah of the sky !
Incarnate Rhapsody !
In thy devotion,
Like Love's breath breathed across the lips of Pain,
Song shudders down the breeze.

Brother of Philomel,
Impassioned singer,
In thy full-throated swell
Such rest and rapture dwell
That joy, Joy-bringer,
Throbs thro' the threnody of weary years.
A-tremble down the green
Of married dusk and sheen
Thy wood-notes linger
In cadences whose laughter breaks to tears,
Forth faltering "Farewell."

SERVUS SERVORUM DEI.

(FROM A PICTURE.)

ASCENT of olive faltered in the air,
And Fra Anselmo, with his well-fed lip
Drawn up in contemplation, felt his brow
And pondered o'er his cards ; his brother there
Had thrown an ace, and smiling even now
As though he held the game, placed hand on hip
And half winked at Anselmo.

These two sat
Within the monastery garden, snug
And comfortable, with a flask of wine
And fruit upon a salver at their hand,—
Fra Bartolómeo, lean and featured fine,
And Fra Anselmo, sensuously fat,
While on the breeze, as from a distant land,
A dreamful voice of bells hung rapturously
And broke to splintered music 'mid the boughs
That bended South and seemed intent to hug
The sun-soaked coping of the garden wall.
“ Brother, I played an ace.” The holy vows
Of Bartolómeo had not hurt his love
Of winning hands at cards. “ Oh, is that all ? ”

Anselmo laughed, "I'll cover it with this,
The diamond is the trump, I think, you said."

And ere he ceased to speak, a haggard man
Peered through the fretted gate,—a man above
Whose brow were lines of toil, and whose bent back,
Grown callous by long journeyings, seemed wed
To the hard angles of his cumbrous pack.
A child was with him whose bewildered eyes
Held that within them which in time should fan
A man's heart into flame, but now there dwelt
Naught there but sadness and the light to seize
The rainbows hid in tears. These two had felt
Hard want together, and their postures plead
More eloquently than all spoken words.
Then from his pack the wayworn peddler drew
Some crucifixes carved in olive wood
And strung with chains of cunning handiwork,
And holding out his wares, in reverence stood
And begged the monks to purchase: "May it
please,
I have sold naught to-day." Anselmo threw
An angry glance, and with impatient jerk
Of his shaved head, ordered the man away,
The while the child looked wonderingly and wept
To see the sacred emblems sadly placed
Again within the pack: "Naught, naught to-day,"
She murmured, and they passed adown the road.—

"I threw an ace," Fra Bartolómeo said.—
The echoes of receding footsteps chased

Each other into distance,—steps that strode
And steps that pattered,—man and child who kept
Together on their weary way. And so
The image of the dying Christ passed, too,
And in the dusty highway disappeared.
Then mid the whispering leaves a note of woe
Seemed mingled with the chimes, and ever through
The music of the vespers wove a sigh.
“I threw an ace,” Fra Bartolómeo said ;
And Fra Anselmo answered : “ Yes, and I
Have thrown a diamond, ’t is the trump that wins
(Whether the cards be spotted black or red),
Most of the games played in this world of sins.”

And once again a sob was in the bells :
Fra Bartolómeo sipped his wine and smiled.
The sun was setting, and the East grew wan
As one whose pallor hasting death foretells.
Anselmo dealt his cards.—The sad-eyed child,—
The bended man,—the broken Christ—were gone.

THE SEA.

ILLIMITABLE Brahman of the Earth !
Great Self to which the World-Soul gravitates !
Thou dost contain all essences, enfold
All secrets in the hollows of thy heart
Where bide unending love,—preventing law.
Teach me but half the knowledge hid in thee,
But half the peace within thy silent cells,
And I shall know my godhead, as I know
Here for a little while my sad humanity.

AN ANSWER.

I QUESTIONED : *Why is evil on the Earth ?*
A sage for answer struck a chord, and lo !
I found the harmony of little worth
To teach my soul the truth it longed to know.

He struck again ; a saddened music, rife
With wisdom, in my ear an answer poured :
Sin is the jarring semitone of life,—
The needed minor in a perfect chord.

ARS LOQUITUR.

I AM the means ; they do degrade me most
Who make of me the end of life's desire ;
I do interpret Beauty, but am not
That Beauty's self ; I ever bend to hear
Divine Imagination's high commands,
Obeying that which is immutable.
They serve me best whose gaze transcends my law,
And know me least who wear me as a gyve.
I am the Living God of little men,—
The tool of great men I.

WINTER RAIN.

LIKE driven smoke the rain among the trees
Slants silently to find the sodden grass,
There is a living shudder in the breeze
And every shrub an icy vesture has ;
No shape of loveliness but, ere it pass,
Doth turn and thrill me with immortal eyes ;
No voice but stills its song to sigh " Alas ! "
No cloud but blots the blue of naked skies.
While I stand mute and mourn a vanished Paradise

Summer, that once within thy scented lap
Pillowed my head, as on a daisied hill
We sat together, thou and I, mayhap
Too much enamoured of each other's will,
Why hast thou left me, desolate and chill,
To fashion ghosts upon the viewless air ?
Why should more favored suitors have their fill
Of joy and sunlight, while my bitter fare
Brings hunger to my soul and to my heart despair ?

Is it that flesh grows gross in tasting joy,—
That Pain's sword gives the accolade divine ?
Is it that sorrow mingles its alloy
To touch men's gilded lives to issues fine ?
Ah ! that the seeker for life's glorious wine

Must rend each pulsing heart from which it flows ;
Ah ! that the working out of love's design
Should crush the perfume from each velvet rose,
And rudely wake the soul from Summer's soft
repose.

Yet hark ! the liquid whisper of the rain
Is riven by a song that high and higher
Soars and fades faintly till the rare refrain
Seems of its own soft rapture to expire.
Is it pale Winter singing to the lyre
Of barren branches and ungarnered sheaves ?
Is it the hymning of a vernal choir,—
The immortal spirits of the unborn leaves ?
I know not, yet my inner sense the song receives.

PHÆDRA (*Loquitur*).

UNLOOSE the triple serpents at my throat
And let me bare my bosom to the night ;
Then leave me, ye whose blood is held in leash
To do a matron's bidding, ye unstained
Træzinian women, with white horror writ
Stark in your bended brows !

I may not tell
What question seeks an answer in my soul,
Seeing I am half human at the best,
And stung by loves that suck the breasts of Fear.
Look, where the sleeve falls open, how my arm
Borrows new pallor from the impassioned moon,—
Herself a borrower, bankrupt e'en as I
When light and love must be repaid in kind.
May I not follow, with unsandaled feet,
The scented wood-ways leading to bowered joy,
And sate mine eyes, though all my body die
Of baulked desire, whereat the sad gods frown ?
I seek Hippolytus, and though he slay,
Still will I seek him, still from 'venging heaven
Braving the bolts ye prate of.

Back, I pray ;
Give me a little air upon my eyes,
Upon my throbbing brows the night's caress ;
Go ye, and win your lords to softer ways :
For me Delight is married to Despair,
And I woo both within the arms of Death.

AN IONIAN FRIEZE.

HORSES rampant and curbed, compactly close,
With polished hooves that quiver from the
earth,
And mane-enfringed necks, whose rondure shows
In silhouette against the pale sky's girth.
Beneath chaste marble, jewelled of chrysolite,
A gracile girl, with fillet-girdled hair,
Stands half revealed through folds of shimmering
white,
Her carmine lips wed to a silver flute,
As though their budding beauty to transmute
To music dying off along the air.
In sage processional pass bearded priests,
And acolytes with pink and boyish limbs,
Chanting to all the gods strange bardic hymns,
Less tuned to sacrifice than fit for feasts.
And over all the antique light, the old
Divine perfection, the lost art which drapes
In fairest majesty heroic shapes
Enwrought upon a field of beaten gold.

A DREAMER.

HE loved the Morning with her lips a-cold,
He drank large wisdom at Noon's nipples
breast,

And, like a later Jason, sought his gold
Among the fleeces of the winnowed West.
Through days divinely blent of love and light,
By reedy runnels he was wont to sit,
Till broke upon his sense-enraptured sight
The Everlasting Poet's epic, writ
In stars upon the placid forehead of the Night.

He loved to feel the pulses of the Spring,
Thrilling with life that struggled to the sun,—
To list the message that the blossoms bring
And count the roses as a guerdon won.
Within the Summer's deep blood-tinctured heart,
To squander days beneath the murmurous trees,
Till through his dreams the cunning hand of Art
Inwrought the splendor of such fantasies,
That Earth, which spake of God, became His
counterpart.

Fain were his feet to follow vagrant ways
When resinous odors filled the eager air,
He loved to wander through the amber haze,
Across the meadows, to the upland where

Sat Autumn pensively amid her sheaves,
Marking the alchemy which all too soon
Transmutes to gold the treasure of her leaves,
In the long season's mellow afternoon,
And touches naked boughs wherethrough the sad
wind grieves.

He was a dreamer, yet he loved his friends ;
He gained no gold, nor ever garnered care ;
He strove not to attain ambition's ends,
Content that other men should do and dare.
Perhaps he was not noble, yet no fears
Made up the aftermath of his emprise ;
For swift success he never bartered tears
Wrung from the fountains of another's eyes,
Nor marred the melody Love sings among the
Spheres.

COMPENSATION.

A BOAT went out with the ebbing tide,
A-throb with the pulse of the heart of the sea,
And curtsied low to the rushy shore,
And dimpled the waves where the stream grew
wide,
Then rounded the light on the lower lea ;
And the boat had never a sail nor oar,
Nor rudder to temper her destiny,
And *Hope* was the name that her gunnel bore,—
But she came not back to me.

A ship sailed into the silent West,
The dearest pride of my heart was she,
And fair on the sunset's face of gold
Her tapering spars stood clear confest ;
And ah ! 't was as sad as sad could be,
For the days went by and I grew old,
And night spread over the slumbering sea,
But my ship was forgot as a tale that is told,
Nor ever sailed back to me.

I gave a song to the listening air,
It trembled aloft with a new delight,
And bore, in the voice of a strange, sweet bird,
A measure of joy that was half despair ;

And the song was a part of my soul, my might,
My innermost thought and tenderest word,
But it sank to a moan and was silenced quite,
Like memoried melodies long since heard,—
Lost stars in a starless night.

A woman fair with the grace that clings
To moonlit eyes and sun-kissed head,
Leaned low and lightly spake to me,
Till my man's heart leaped with a sense of wings :
“Thy hope to an unknown land is sped,
Thy pride is wrecked in a soundless sea,
And the fragrant flower of song is dead,—
Lost to the world and lost to thee,—
But love is left,” she said.

AVE AMERICA !

AN ODE.

I.

DEAR Land, my Mother ! To thy feet I bring
The amplest measure of a faltering song ;
Hope's starlike harbinger ! Wherever wrong
Hath wrought the work of her imagining,
Wherever men have felt the gall of chains
And through the dark have whispered Liberty,
Or women, widowed of divinest dowers,
Have smiled between their sobs to dream of thee,
There hast thou given the solace of thy plains,
The shelter of thy battlemented towers.
Thy hills are mine, O Land made doubly dear
By hallowed homes and yet more hallowed
graves ;
Thy coasts whose marge perennially doth hear
The husky murmurs of innumerable waves ;
Thy forests, too, with shades more soft than sleep,
And sanctities of solitude wherethrough
Strange beauty, which from alien eyes doth keep
Her fair perfection, steals in ever new
And ever growing wonder. Mine thy bowers,
And all the mellow comfort of thy fields

Nourished with sunlight and the breath of flowers
And aftermath perfumes whose parting yields
An incense fine as prayer. Could I but pass
Long days in silence on thy sloping meads,
Amid the populous rumors of the grass,
Unrest had grown to graciousness, whereof contentment breeds.

II.

And yet, dear Land, a Nation's vows
Are graven on thy laurelled brows ;
For thou wast perfected of fire,
Fair fruitage of the World's desire,
Thy mother Justice, War thy sire.
War when a tyrant's mailed hand
Sent freedom thrilling through the land ;
War when again oppression sought
To dwarf the rights which blood had bought ;
And War, War, War when Treason's mouth
Spat poison through the amber South,
And thy own children struck the blow
Which, aimed aright, had laid thee low.

Hark to the bells !

The large alarm that onward speeds,
Forerunner of undying deeds,

Outrung from spire to spire,

To touch the mild

Peace-pipings with heroic ire !

How the call swells !

Strenuous, wild,

Impatient ! And the guns, the guns !
From Sumter booms
The signal to thy thousand looms,—
The summons to thy million sons,
Dear Country, to put off the ways
And works of honeyed quietude ;
To meet the rude
Awakening with unquickened breath ;
And with unflinching gaze
To look into the sodden eyes of death.
See the battalions splendidly sweeping
Down from the North !
With unwavering lines, coming forth
To bring sunlight of day
To the marshes where Treason is stealthily creeping,
Black in a habit of gray.

III.

But ah ! the sons who at their mother's feet
Kissed Death's pale lips and knew their joy complete !
Ah ! thou supreme civilian, tender, wise,
With fair peace-offerings in thy rugged hands,
And such divine forgiveness in thy eyes
As knows no counterpart in all the storied lands !
The world's vast harmony by thy devotion
Is made complete ; and through its concords ring
The notes of thy fair life, in ordered motion,
Like melody from some earth-nurtured spring,
Or streams that in the throbbing heart of ocean

Flow on forever and forever sing.

From thee humanity in every clime
A deeper love of human freedom gains,
While rings the echo of the falling chains

Struck off by thee and made by thee sublime.
And as o'er some imperishable bower

The gentle hand of brotherhood might crave
Love's benediction tenderly to shower,

So were I fain, strong leader of the brave,
To fling the fragrance of this fading flower,
Across the fadeless verdure of thy grave.

IV.

Rare is the recompense of mighty deeds,
And high the heritage of lofty souls ;
And tho' the memory of the past recedes
Into the mist of unremembering years,—

Tho' Time's wheel rolls
Swift on its axle, scorning human tears
And men's sad laughter,—yet the spirit lives
Which makes immortal all great labor done,
All noble thought translated into act,
And ever gives,

Finer than fable, the undying fact
Which lies behind each radiant victory won.

And thou, my Mother, with eternal youth
Set like a pearl above thy unruffled brows,
Art grown more fair that thou awhile didst feel
The bite of steel,

And in the darkest of thy days wore truth,
The chiefest jewel in thy diadem.

No further need thy fervor to arouse,
For thou art victress and the unpriced gem
Of liberty is thine,

And all the graces that in perfect-statured wo-
manhood combine.

I see thee now, resplendent, prodigal,
With royal opulence of field and mine
Poured in thy broad lap ; with thy granaries all
Bursting to hold the gifts of generous earth ;

I mark thy mellow fruitage, thy red wine,
Sun-tinctured in a million purple hearts ;

The song of comfort that doth mock at dearth ;
I hear the hum which from unnumbered marts
Bruits of thy commerce circling land and sea,—
A nation's life-blood pulsing endlessly ;

I hear the clack of laboring looms, and long
Listen elated to the shuttle's song ;
Before the crescent sickles of the free

A continent's fair harvest bows, and shrill,
Unceasing invocations speed the flight
Of tireless messengers, to carry art
To regions that but late have seen the light,
Through nerves which thrill

To bear the deep pulsations of a heart

Which falters not, companioned with a never-
faltering will.

Behold ! great Land, thy majesty, and raise
In deep-voiced ecstasy a song of praise.

V.

What of the future, O Land of the World's
aspiration ?

Land of large symmetries wrought on the prairies'
broad faces,

Land ever lulled by the somnolent kiss of the ocean,
Ever enthralled with the azure-eyed lakes, con-
summation

And pride of a continent, deep in whose bosom
no traces

Of tyranny ever have marred a glad nation's
devotion,—

What may anointed eyes see

Of the future for thee ?

Deep are the signs and portents, wide in the skies
are they glowing ;

Onward and upward eternally, fleet as thy rivers
are flowing,

Speeds thy divinely appointed destiny, ever and
ever

Seer and Prophet and Bard, glad in their calling,
bestowing

Prophecy, promise, and song, pledge that no
power shall sever

Thee from thy glory, dear Land ; us from thy love,
gentle Mother ;

Thee from the fervor of hearts welded as brother
to brother ;

Us from thy beauty and truth ; thee and thy sons
from each other.

All hail to thee, Beautiful One ! deep revered,
love of a nation !

To thee be the hand horizontal uplifted, in grave
salutation ;

In thee are the potencies wrapped, new lights
springing forth of thy being

As the stars from the womb of the night. Press
on, in the vision all-seeing,

Through darkness and dread and despair, to the
dawn and the light and the glory,

Thy 'scutcheon the worth of mankind, thy annals
humanity's story.

SONNETS.

UNCROWNED.

LOVE looked upon me with immortal eyes,
And I became a god with heart of flame ;
Faith, with a woman's lips, pronounced my name
Full tenderly, entreating, loverwise.
Each spake unto me in the other's guise ;
Love said : *Believe. Unfaith is true love's shame.*
And like a benison Faith's whisper came :
Love is the deepest of my mysteries.

Then I who lacked fine fibre to perceive
Life's high beatitudes, trailed in the dust
The chaplet Heaven had placed upon my head ;
Alas ! in loving I could not believe ;
I dallied with the courtesan Distrust ;
I questioned ! Faith and Love together fled.

KARMA.

BIRTH and desire and death and birth again.
The purgatory of a deathless soul,
Elusive bubbles which forever roll
Down restless rivers to the moaning main ;
The seasons open and the seasons wane,
Eternal bells for dead millenniums toll,
Karma endures, and lays its weight of dole
Upon the tablets of the aching brain.

The deeds of men are eddies in the wave,
Forever forming fainter, wider rings ;
Alas ! there is no potency to save,
Nor for the pain of life a healing balm.
Oh, for the Buddha's holy chastenings !
The blest Nirvâna ! The unending calm !

EARTH AND NIGHT.

(PARAPHRASE OF WALT WHITMAN.)

I WALK beneath the tender, growing night,
Where darkness makes a mystery of the sea,
Chanting beatitudes, as one made free
And soaring skyward in ecstatic flight.
Upon my lips the south wind breathes delight,
And thro' the slumbering trees pours melody ;
Press close, bare-bosomed joy, for I am he
With eyes anointed to diviner sight.

Still, nodding Night ! that for my solace keepest
A beauty which no touch of tempest mars ;
Sad Earth ! that for departed sunset weepst,
I read a stern evangel in thy scars.
I am the lover in whose heart thou sleepest,
O Night ! that hast the largess of the stars.

SIC ITUR AD ASTRA.

WHO builds on Reason builds upon the sand
A fabric mortal as the human brain,
A fetich-temple crumbling 'neath the strain
Of Love's first touch, and razed at her demand.
Mind is a function, by Omniscience planned,
Dull as digestion, earthly-bred as pain ;
Thought's final triumph is to prove thought vain,
And logic's life is quenched by logic's hand.

The Spirit's intuition, strong and pure,
Alone soars fetterless to realms above,
Leaping in scorn past reason's bounds, secure
Where sentient knowledge dies, true life to prove ;
Emotion, feeling, these alone endure ;
Thank God ! God is not Intellect, but Love.

AN EARLY-APRIL MORNING.

ACROSS the sky the rifted clouds pursue
Rare shapes enwrought to wonders manifold,
And robins glance obliquely to behold
The cawing caravans that speck the blue ;
Thy jewels are half a frost and half a dew,
And o'er the earthy stretches of the wold
A warm caress, from fingers still a-cold,
Falls like an old song in a cadence new.

Dear Morning ! with thy maid's hair unconfined
By virgin fillets of a later spring,
Risen as from a rounded dream to find
The world a-riot for a bourgeoning,
Thy eyes spill sleep and sunlight, while the wind
Beats blood to blushes with his gusty wing.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

AMBITION'S finger beckoned and I ran
With bleeding feet o'er rugged paths and
drear,
Spurning the inward whispers, soft and clear,
Which said : " In vain ! Thy life is but a span ;
The grave shall cover all." Still, in the van
Of human action, I thought soon to rear
Some mighty monument to vanquished fear,
—A shaft to mark the triumph of a *Man*.

Poor fool ! My gold was lost amid the dross ;
Hope died within me, and, as one who mourns,
I bowed before a bitter sense of loss,
Clinging despairing to the altar's horns,
And raised my eyes to where, upon the cross,
In sad reproval, hung a crown of thorns.

ELECTRA.

MY Love too stately is to be but fair,
Too fair she is for naught but stateliness ;
She bids me Nay, and yet a silent Yes
Dwells in the dusk her shadowy eyelids wear.
My Love's step makes a music in the air,
Touching the sense with a divine caress,
And all the rapture of the dawn doth bless
The light that leaps to life across her hair.

Her mouth is just the love-couch for a song,
And 'mid the fragrance of its riven flowers
Low laughter breaks and trembles close to tears
Mingled of mirth and melody, as a throng
Of bird notes wakes to joy the drowsy hours
And weaves delight through all the grieving
years.

BEDTIME.

AS children, who, through all the sunburnt day,
Have tossed aside their playthings, one by
one,

Ceasing each frolic ere 't were well begun
To taste the joyance of some newer play,
When bedtime comes, turn from their games away,
With little feet too heavy now to run
And eyes too full of sleep to miss the sun
Whose beams still on the mother's forehead stay ;

So we, tired children of the garnered years,
Grown weary of our toys of gold and place,
Nor craving uncompanioned days to reap
The harvest of our half remembered tears,
Look in the universal mother's face,
And murmuring : " It is bedtime," fall asleep.

DECORATION DAY.

LET fall the roses gently. It may be
That in the sunlight of a fairer clime
They shall rebloom to beauty as sublime
As this departed flower of chivalry ;
And ever as the sobbing of the sea,
Breeze-rippled, breaks to chants of lordlier
rhyme,
Silence your dirges, and in martial time
Let loud-lipped trumpets blazon victory !

Yield not to grief the solace of a tear,
But 'neath the forefront of a spacious sky
Smile all exultant, as they smiled at fear
Who dared to do when doing meant to die.
So best may comrades prove remembrance dear,
So best be hallowed earth where soldiers lie.

A SONNET OF SILENCE.

TIPTOE, with finger at her lip, and rare
Red-rose mouth rounded to a song unsung,
A mute maid half a-dream her flowers among,—
Nature, whose love the loves of all men bear,
Whose eyes the eyes of all men have found fair,
Feels in the changes on her spirit rung
The melody of an unspoken tongue,
The eloquence of silence everywhere.

Hushed is the poesy of Summer flowers,
Silent the vast evangel of the stars,
And Time, whose noiseless fingers tell the hours
Like beads upon a vestal's rosary,
Hears voiceless music writ in golden bars,—
The mirth of moonlight silent on the sea.

VICTOR HUGO.

(MAY 22, 1885.)

E VANGELIST of truth, whose sovereign glance
Encompassed centuries, and from the fen
Of passion wrested beauty ; thou whose pen
Ennobled love and glorified romance ;
Great champion of liberty, whose lance—
A beacon to the wavering hearts of men—
Impaled the false, and ever and again
Bare death to tyranny and fame to France.

To thee immortal laurel wreaths belong,
To us a memory that the world reveres ;
'T was thine to know the good, to right the wrong
'T is ours to glean the fruitage of thy years ;
Thou gav'st to us a gift divine—thy song,
We give to thee our human tribute—tears.

WALT WHITMAN.

(MAY 31, 1886.)

BOLD innovator in the realm of thought ;
Strong-sinewed Titan, fighting for the right,
And wresting from the panoplies of night
The glories that the patient stars have caught
From an evanished sun ; brave teacher taught
By Nature's lips to see with Nature's sight,
And so to shed day's fair, unsullied light
Upon the work your rugged hands have wrought.

You stand serene upon your mountain crag,
Unmindful of the shallow hum which fills
The valleys with derision. You can wait,
And waiting, find your own, when prescient Fate
Shall grant slow justice, and unfurl the flag
Of Innocency on a thousand hills.

WALT WHITMAN.

(MARCH 26, 1892.)

DARKNESS and death? Nay, Pioneer, for thee
The day of deeper vision has begun;
There is no darkness for the central sun
Nor any death for immortality.
At last the song of all fair songs that be,
At last the guerdon of a race well run,
The upswelling joy to know the victory won,
The river's rapture when it finds the sea.

Ah, thou art wrought in an heroic mould,
The modern man upon whose brow yet stays
A gleam of glory from the age of gold,—
A diadem which all the gods have kissed.
Hail and farewell! flower of the antique days,—
Democracy's divine protagonist.

TO JOHN KEATS.

DEEP in the whisp'ring pine whose profile bars
The moon's white face ; hush'd in the per-
fumed bowers,
Where, languid with the breath of sleeping flowers,
The summer night lies panoplied in stars ;
High on the mountain crags of brakes and scars,
A spirit sought to find in poesy's powers
Some beauty to bedeck time's conquering hours,
Like roses on the flaming front of Mars.

Yet still, tho' lovingly, he sought in vain,
Till nature's blossom bore the bloom of art,—
Till ecstasy of joy had wedded pain
In bonds which never hand of man shall part ;
Then found within the chambers of thy brain
The sacred fire to light Endymion's heart.

TO HERBERT SPENCER.

THINKER of ages ! probing pregnant deeps
Of potent science, till your trained eye saw,
Amid the maze, a unity of law,—
An ordered motion whose pulse ever keeps
Its time-beat while the silent cosmos sleeps,
Calm in its poise ! The glory yours to draw
From myths of special causes the hid flaw
That marks them false. Humanity so reaps

The fruitful harvest that your hands have sown,
And finds in Force, evolved, dispelled, the trace
Of that design which, knowing, yet unknown,
Thrills through a universe from crown to base.
The fact is ours,—the honor yours alone
To fling this beacon into trackless space !

AN IDLE DAY:

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS.

ONE O'CLOCK.

SALVE.

SLEEP, soft begetter of our fantasies !
Inconsequent philosopher of dreams !
I give thee greeting as a friend who seems
To link my spirit to the slumbering trees ;
Yet farewell for a season ; hours like these
Bear golden freightage on their hurrying streams,
—Brave argosies of thought enriched by gleams
Divinely dowered of deepest mysteries.

I am in love with Earth, and find it fair
To lie within the rondure of her arms
Beneath a plenitude of stars, caressing
The moony midnight of her tresséd hair,
And draining from her fruitful lips the blessing
And guerdon of her immemorial charms.

TWO O'CLOCK.

HEART OF THE NIGHT.

SILENCE, that art the harbinger of thought,
And Fancy, foster-child of Solitude ;
Companions of the meadow and the wood,
Whose cheer my early morning steps have sought ;
How fair the fabric by your cunning wrought
Upon my mild and meditative mood,
The while the unneighbored stars do bend and
brood
Above the vasty darkness vision-fraught !

Ah ! beating heart of the soft sandaled night !
Slow pulse of sad hours orphaned of the sun !
Your rhythm is timed to measures of that song
Which strong seraphic voices roll along,
From mountain height to towering mountain height,
Like the proud pæan for a victory won.

THREE O'CLOCK.

PROMISE OF DAWN.

A POTENCY and promise. Far away
Gaunt figures grow to being in the mist ;
A woven wonder of pale amethyst,
Shot through with filaments of paler gray,
Spreads like a vestment for the unborn day,
Trailing imperial skirts where clouds have kissed
The silence-haunted hills which lean and list
The utterance of the everlasting Yea.

Let there be Light ! I seem to hear the cry
Down all the ample corridors of Night,
And dark infinitudes of lonesome sky
Grow voluble with that majestic calling,
Reverberant echoes ever faintlier falling
Through leagues of viewless air : *Let there be Light !*

FOUR O'CLOCK.

• DAYBREAK IN THE WOODS.

NIGHT falls away and fades along the breeze,
Lost in the turning of diurnal tides,
The morning, like a pallid virgin, glides
In cool seclusion 'mid the spectral trees ;
And I, more early risen than the bees
Whose tardy wooing the laburnum chides,
Am ravished by an undersong that bides
The lapsing of the leafy harmonies.

I lift my lips to meet the kiss of Morn,
Breathing the breath of Day's sweet maiden-
time,
And feel within my spirit, loverwise,
The deep, divine elation sometimes born
Of strains of music or a far-off chime
Or love-light lambent in a woman's eyes.

FIVE O'CLOCK.

A WOODLAND POET.

A LIQUID music wrought of many a trill,
Light as low laughter o'er a summer lea,
Pours down the greenwood aisles an ecstasy,—
Utters its rapture, falters and is still.
Wood Robin ! Sylvan Poet that dost spill
Such dear delights through listening leaves !
Thou free
Spendthrift of joy and hoarded melody !
What strange love philter hath beguiled thy will ?

For I do think there live within thy breast
The faith and fervor of an antique age,
Tuning thy note, at Beauty's soft behest,
Our sordid aspiration to assuage,
And to our dull ears making manifest
The pulse and passion of our heritage.

SIX O'CLOCK.

THE FARM-YARD.

UNHARROWED by the toiling town's alarm,
In blest seclusion from the daily fret
Which avarice and blinded greed beget,
Bask the broad acres of the peaceful farm ;
And in its special angle, walled from harm,
The barn-yard, deep with husks of corn which
yet
Smell of the fields and tell of honest sweat,
Lies in the morning sunshine, wide and warm.

Here huddled fatlings slumber in the pens,
While the cocks' shrill defiance outsoar
The soft staccato of maternal hens ;
And from the populous tangles of a vine
Pert sparrows perch upon the stable door ;
And bright pails foam beneath large-uddered
kine.

SEVEN O'CLOCK.

BLENDED VOICES.

NATURE is full of voices ; some that plead
And some that sorrow and yet more that
sing ;

Forever keeping for my questioning
A satisfying answer. This frail reed
Along the marshes whispers of its need ;
And in the whirring of a sudden wing
I catch the lilt of love, wherein the sting
Yet lingers of love's half-forgotten creed.

I hear a ditty made of woven sighs—
A heart-break in a cadence ; and again
The little lisping of a crippled child
Full of the tender eloquence of pain ;
And evermore a monotone of mild
And mellow music born in Paradise.

EIGHT O'CLOCK.

CLOVER.

JUST where the maples whisper morning vows
To the quick runnel with its mimic tides,
I know a field of clover which divides
The meadow grasses from the orchard boughs ;
And there, knee deep, stand contemplative cows,
With eyes benignant and swift shuddering hides
And beaded noses and a breath where 'bides
The garnered sweetness of the scented mows.

They stand, unmindful of a world of strife
Wherein men's souls are battered to a lie,
And hoarded dollars are the goal of life,
And every mart is tolling Beauty's knell,—
Where he 's a hero who can cheapest buy,
And he a god who can the dearest sell.

NINE O'CLOCK.

WHISPERS OF THE CORN.

WHAT sunlit spaces ! Is the world asleep,
Lulled by the murmurous voices of the morn,
The while amid the serried ranks of corn
The keen-edged leaves their idle gossip keep ?
Perhaps it is but fancy that some deep
And mythic message to my sense is borne,—
Half a light song, and half a sigh forlorn,
Like laughter on the lips of them that weep.

Indeed I know not ; yet within my ears
Linger such honeyed accents as betem
Strange sweetness to the melody of tears,
And to rejoicing new delights which seem
The tender lays of long-forgotten years,
Reëchoed softly through a tranquil dream.

TEN O'CLOCK.

MID-MORN.

BEAUTY is never wholly lost to sight,
For though she shrink affrighted at the din,
Haply her presence still does enter in
The open doorway of our hearts to light
Our lives to righteousness. Nor may the might
Of Mammon or the manacles of sin
Prevent her perfectness, nor ever win
The scent from roses or the stars from night.

So, lying prone along the summer grass,
I am content with all things ; and the air
Comes laden with a song, and clouds that pass
Above me to my soul a promise bear ;
And every meadow-lark a message has,
And every meadow flower is a prayer.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

A WAYSIDE SPRING.

THRICE-BLEST Tranquillity that dwellest
here !

How like a guardian soul with silent wing
Thou hoverest above this wayside spring
Outgushing in mellifluence cool and clear !
Faring along the dusty road, I near
The dripping stones whereto wet mosses cling,
And sit me down in sheer content, and sing,
And hearken to the far-off chanticleer.

What art could so have satisfied my whim
As this half cocoanut ? I take it up
And dally with anticipation, then
Dip deep and drink to all wayfaring men
In liquid ecstasy which wooes the brim
Of this inimitable drinking cup.

NOON.

HALF WAY TO ARCADY.

THE faultless fervor of a day in June ;
An insect-whisper vibrant in the air ;
The breath of daisies shedding everywhere
Soft wafture o'er the lids of nodding noon.
Deep in the listening woods an ancient croon
Of hermit crickets weaving a fanfare
Through slender undertones, elusive, rare
As songs in sleep sung to an antique tune.

The far-off Sabbath-voice of chiming bells
A peace evangel murmurs to the heart ;
A scent, half clover's and half asphodel's,
Falters through dusks wherein strange music
dwells ;
Is it the echo of Pan's pipe which tells
Its story to the ravished ears of Art ?

ONE O'CLOCK.

A WILD ROSE.

WHERE the warm upland melts against the blue,
An ancient fence, o'er which the lichen
grows,

Meets a more ancient wall ; and rare repose
Dwells in the myriad little sounds which sue
The aged silences in accents new ;
And in that sun-soaked angle blooms a rose,
Whose heart, blood-tinctured by the joy it knows,
Just forms the chalice for a drop of dew.

There will I lie and dream and idly wreath
The tender grasses till my heart discover
Somewhat of their content ; and there, beneath
The vines o'er which pale butterflies do hover,
I 'll listen while the passionate rose doth breathe
Her soft love-secrets to her powdered lover.

TWO O'CLOCK.

ROADWAY DUST.

A LONG the honest turnpike honest dust
Keeps its true color, mindless of the fields,—
Scorning the brighter tints which summer yields,
Nor aping flowers that bloom because they must ;
It is a type of individual trust
In one's own selfhood,—a true force that yields
The power which moves the world, and ever
shields
Man from servility that breeds disgust.

I 'll bow to genius, every reverence show,
And sit all meekly at the feet of art,
Albeit I will not imitate a king,
Nor strive to be another's counterpart,
For though 't is great to be an Angelo,
To be one's self is yet a greater thing !

THREE O'CLOCK.

WHEAT-BILLOWS.

THE ground slopes upward towards a little hill
Drenched in the sunlight, and within the
space

A field of wheat, o'er which the breezes trace
Tremors of light and shade that throb and thrill
In billowy undulations, quickening till

The field lies like a love-enamored face
Upturned to let the warm caresses chase
Each other, that the wind may have his will.

So have I seen a woman luring love
With quivering silk lips and breath of fire,
The while across her cheek in colors clear
The swift blood chased the pallors of desire,
And strange mistrust her tender bosom clove,
And half her heart was flame and half was fear.

FOUR O'CLOCK.

REMEMBRANCE.

A QUICK commotion in the startled leaves,
A shudder of the living green ; I know
It was a bird that winged its flight, although
I saw no creature. So my soul receives
Time's fleeting passage as my life it cleaves
With human happiness or human woe ;
Such are the memories that come and go,
The while the sun his dappled patchwork weaves.

And I, who lean and dream, am half in love
With things unreal and passion's whitened em-
bers,
Embracing shadowy shapes, nor asking why
A vanished beauty holds a joy above
All others, as the saddened night remembers
Dead meteors that have once illumed a sky.

FIVE O'CLOCK.

ASPIRATION.

DROWSING beneath the hum of summer bees,
Marking with half-closed eyes the liberal sky,
Lulled to soft slumbers by the lullaby
Of winds grown voluble among the trees,
My seeking soul, as one who fain would seize
The passing passion of a song on high,
Leaps upward with the immemorial cry
Which God has echoed down the centuries.

The kindred spirits of the sunburnt day
Make earth a heaven and existence bliss,—
Plume with Mercurial wings my feet of clay
And touch my brows with a celestial kiss,
Till lips that faltered lisp a loftier lay,
And from a fairer world bring peace to this.

SIX O'CLOCK.

CLOUD-MAGIC.

IMAGINATION is the highest truth ;
And I, upgazing through the spaces clear
To mark the clouds' caprices, am a seer,
From Fancy's fabric fashioning uncouth
Yet faithful images,—such forms, in sooth,
As tempt to favor while they touch with fear ;
Misshapen giants with a changeful leer ;
Nude naiads glorious in perennial youth.

Then passionate faces yearning towards the West,
The nostrils palpitant with strange desire,
A shudder quickening the nether lip,
Wherefrom the blood dies of its own unrest ;
Again a sudden change ; a helmless ship ;
The chaos of the red sun's funeral pyre.

SEVEN O'CLOCK.

THE BROOK.

LIGHT-HEARTED babbler of a thousand tales,
Half sung, half spoken, and in broken trills
Borne lightly to my ear, thy music fills
My heart with joy when summer daylight pales,
And through the murmurous glooms of shadowy
dales
Thou bearest whispers from the distant hills ;
And as the iterant voices of thy rills
Sing among pebbles, visions of white sails

That top quaint fishing craft upon the river
Wherein thou find'st at last thy resting-place,
Rise up before me and in silence quiver
Like sudden smiles across a questioning face ;
Till wider fancy seems to picture thee
Enfolded, yet still singing, in the sea.

EIGHT O'CLOCK.

THE TWILIGHTS.

A LIGHT wind loiters down the wooded ways,
 Bearing the breath of orchards and replete
 With such an essence as alone should greet
A sense grown fine through many vagrant days.
A sigh among the slender leafage stays,
 And married lights break into shafts and meet
 Where weary Nature, in her green retreat,
Upon her lips a hushing finger lays.

A dying radiance through the thicket gleams,
 The colors of the day are slowly furled,
 A mystery trembles onward silverly,—
 A lily on the bosom of the world,—
Elusive as the pageantry of dreams
 Or moonlight sleeping on a summer sea.

NINE O'CLOCK.

PERSPECTIVE.

I PAUSE upon a mystic borderland
Wherefrom the visible world seems all besprent
With flowers of changeful hue and colors blent
In strange confusion. I do think a band
Of those Greek heroes who once, hand to hand,
Fought for the prizes which the gods had sent,
Sometime their glowing presence must have lent
To these green aisles where wooded sentries stand.

How weirdly, through the glooms of yonder tree,
Wavers the owl's cry, with its minor strains
Fateful as dirges sung to murdered joy,—
Sad as the sobs of pale Andromache
To see her Hector, foul with gory stains,
Dragged pitilessly 'neath the walls of Troy !

TEN O'CLOCK.

FANTASY.

AS some luxurious beauty of the East,
Grown languid in the cassia-scented air,
With narrowed eyes looks through her sultry hair,
And toys the sweetmeats at a regal feast,
The while her bodice, from its cords released,
Stays still a-warm to know her bosom there,—
So seems the night, with constellations fair,
Heavy with scents left when the breezes ceased.

Am I alone? Is not some spirit here?
Across the waiting air there comes a call;
High overhead the tasselled branches nod,
With just a whisper flattering the ear,
And silence, with its million tongues, fills all
The woodland spaces with the name of God.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

NOCTURNE.

A NIGHT bird, from the hollow of the dark,
Beats upward through the pulseless air and
dies

Into the mighty mystery of the skies
That bend, with large imperial brows, to mark
Earth's slumbering perfectness, mayhap to hark
Her little breathings as she lightly lies,—
To-morrow's sunlight prisoned in her eyes,
And in her heart songs of to-morrow's lark.

So thoughts which will not wear the yoke of words,
Fretting the stillness with their whispering wings,
Take flight more swift and silent than the bird's,
Into a heaven of vaster fashionings ;
And unknown beauty all my vision girds,
And voiceless music through my spirit sings.

MIDNIGHT.

VALE.

O H ! tender benison of darkness, cast
 Upon the throbbing bosom of the earth,—
 Dropt as a mantle over all the mirth
And madness of the day,—thou ever hast
A sweet compassion for us, and at last
 A poppied peace ! I gaze upon the girth
 Of heaven, heavy with the rare new birth
Of beauty crescent through the spaces vast,

The while the unruffled forehead of the night
 Lifts royally its diadem of stars ;
 Then, as a sleeper fares adown his way
'Mid dreamy meadows, lying still and white,
 I thread the moonlit lane, pass through the bars,
 And close the record of an idle day.

A PRIMROSE PATH:

SONGS AND TRIFLES.

BETWEEN.

BETWEEN the sea sand and the sea
The yellow foam flakes lightly lie,
A very dross of waves, till free
Quick-kissing breezes surge and sigh,
And all the laurels on the lea
Bend low to listen as bends the sky
Where spaces throb with melody.
Then foam is wrought to gold, and I,
Silent, find Heaven surrounding me—
In gilded fringe—in breeze's sigh ;
Between the sea sand and the sea
Where yellow foam flakes lightly lie ;
Where spaces throb with melody
Between the skylark and the sky.

Between the sunset and the sun
Night slumbers on the sleeping bars,
And through its curtain, one by one,
Gleam tender glances of the stars
Between the sunset and the sun.
And so between my love's lips lies
An untold message meant for me ;
Whether 't will bring me sweet surprise
Or dole or doubt or Paradise
Is known alone to destiny.

Yet, as I wait, a dream of tears
 Between her eyelids and her eyes—
 A mystery of mist—appears,
 That hints of hope and flatters fears,
 And on her lips a shudder of sighs,
 And on her lids a red that dies
 To slumberous shadows that fall and rise,
 Till as I seek some sign to see,
 Between her eyelids and her eyes
 Love lights his lamp and laughs at me.

CRADLE SONG.

[FROM THE DRAMA "MARIE DEL CARMEN."]

SLEEP, my pretty one,
 Sleep, my little one,
 Rose in the garden is blooming so red ;
 Over the flowers the fleet-footed hours
 Dance into dreamland to melody wed
 To the voice of the stream—to a song in a dream,
 Sung low by the brook to its stone-covered bed,
 Sung soft as it goes ;
 And the heart of the rose
 Gives a tremulous leap
 As the melody flows.
 Ah, little one, sleep,
 Sleep.

Peace, my little one,
Peace, my pretty one,
Lilies bend low to the breath of the breeze ;
Lithe as a willow, the boat on the billow
High tosses the spray for the sunlight to tease
With a kiss and a tear—with a rainbow, a fear,
For the light is the sun's and the spray is the sea's.
And the wind o'er the lea
Breaks to cadences free
As the waves that release
The low laugh of the sea.
My pretty one, peace,
Peace.

Joy, my pretty one,
Joy, my little one,
Fairies of night from their bright-jewelled cars
Fling a faint sheen and shimmer on ripples where
glimmer
The up-gazing eyes of the down-gazing stars ;
And the boat, while it glides, sings the song of
the tides
As they kiss into languor the sand of the bars.
Oh, river flow fleet,
Ere the melody meet
The sea's breath to destroy
What the echoes repeat :
My little one, joy,
Joy !

CAPRICE.

A SUMMER night with perfumed breath
Told love-tales to the listening trees,
And hedge-row buds, in guise of death,
Dreamed of the kisses of the bees,
While, wheeling, circling, faint and far,
A firefly showed its shimmering spark,
And, like an evanescent star,
Painted its life along the dark ;
And I, who wandered in the lane,
Grew envious of a thing so free,
And sighed and gazed and sighed again,
And cried : " Kind Heaven give to me
The firefly's liberty."

My love came tripping down the lane ;
The boughs bent low to touch her head ;
The clover never felt the pain
Of death beneath so light a tread ;
And ere I knew, the firefly's wings
Were tangled in her burnished hair,
The intermittent glimmerings
Illumining a face more fair ;
Then I, who felt my heart beat wild
The love-light in her eyes to see,
Became capricious as a child,
And prayed : " Sweet Heaven grant to me
A like captivity."

A SERENADE.

I.

ON roses asleep in the starlight,
On daisies that dream of the sky,
The tremor and touch of a far light
Falls faint through the spaces on high,—
Falls fair where the tendrils are clinging,
Lies light where the lilies are flinging
Perfumes to the winds that are singing
A song that is born of a sigh.

II.

Low brows for a thousand caresses,
Lithe throat for a season's delight,
Ah ! spice-scented wonder of tresses
Dim-shadowed and duskily bright,
Pale passionate arms that embower
Light love that endures but an hour,
Lips pressed like a flower on a flower,
Eyes dark with the spell of the night.

III.

Bitter-sweet though the pang and the pleasure,
I would rather be bounden than free ;
Life treadeth a statelier measure
With the finger of Love on the key ;

Pain kisses the rod of the Giver,
As the ripples in ecstasy quiver
Where breaks the sad heart of the river
In the turbulent heart of the sea.

LOVE CAME TO ME.

LOVE came to me when I was young ;
He brought me songs, he brought me flowers ;
Love wooed me lightly, trees among,
And dallied under scented bowers ;
And loud he carolled : " Love is King !"
For he was riotous as spring
And careless of the hours,—
When I was young.

Love lingered near when I grew old ;
He brought me light from stars above ;
And consolations manifold
He fluted to me like a dove ;
And love leaned out of Paradise
And gently kissed my faded eyes
And whispered : " God is Love,"—
When I grew old.

FLOWER O' THE SEA.

A LITTLE maiden debonair
With sunshine tangled in her hair,
Along with me, beside the sea,
Trod yellow sands, and clapped her hands
To see the foam come rolling home,—
Come rolling home right royally.

She never dreamed that she was fair,
This little maiden debonair,
Nor questioned I the reason why
I found to stray with her alway
Was veriest joy,—I but a boy
With small feet brown and bare.

And once a wave broke high in air,
Scattering foam flakes everywhere,
And something bright flashed in the sight
Of her, my maiden debonair ;
And when the tide went out, she cried :
“See, see ; a pearl ! The breakers hurl
Their gems to land for our delight.”

And so we strayed, my little maid
And I, beside the sea ;
And onward sped the silent years,
And silenter grew we,
For I was thoughtfuller, and she
Was not the same to me.

There grew a wonder in her eyes,—
My maiden dainty, debonair,—
And voices tuned to subtler art
Were voluble within her heart
And to her soul made questioning ;
She felt the spell, yet could not tell
Whence sudden shame so strangely came ;
Whence hopes and fears and tremulous tears
And sweet surprise and quivering sighs,—
Half laughter,—laid on lips that sing.
She could not tell ; she scarce need care,
My maiden slender, debonair.

But I knew well. The child had fled
And left a woman in her stead ;
My maiden shy and debonair
Had 'wakened in her Paradise,
And, fairer grown, had grown more wise,
Alas ! as wise as fair.

And as again beside the sea
We wandered homeward silently,
I leaned and lightly touched her hair,
And said : “ Sweet maiden debonair,
A little girl once found a pearl
Left by the deep mysterious tide,—
A thing of beauty from the wide
Unfathomed sea ; nor faltered she,
But in her hair the treasure fair
Set like a dew-drop in a rose.
And now, my maiden debonair,

Your heart has found a gem more rare,—
A pearl from out the sea of life,—
Love, that the flowing tides enclose.
The child knew not ; the woman knows ;
And knowledge ever bringeth strife ;
Yet where the pearl lies, is repose,—
Repose which I would have you share
With me, dear maiden debonair."

She paused a space, then gently drew
From out her breast a pearl, and said :
"Forth from the sea it came to me,
And from my heart it goes to you."
And lo ! the starlight of the skies
Lay sleeping in her lifted eyes,
And on her brow a glory shed.
And faint across the meadows fell
The calling of a vesper bell
That high above sang *Love !* and *Love !*
And ah ! my maiden debonair,
How fair you were ! How passing fair !
As through the sand we trod the strand
And gazed far out to sea.

MARGUERITE.

FAIR Marguerite, the red of parted lips
Grows deeper, and the glory of thy brow
More glorious yet, as lowered lids allow
Swift glances, fleeting, but as sweet as sips

Of honey from the hearts of flowers. So now,
Poised in the halo of the sun that dips
Behind the empurpled hills, thy presence seems
The realized perfection of my dreams.

Sweet, silent Marguerite ! How may I name
The hundred-tinted shadows of thy hair ?
Or count the liquid lights of eyes as rare
As polished pearls beneath white jets of flame,
Or soft stars scintillant through lambent air
In the hushed night ? How, seeing thee, proclaim
The love I fain would bring, a sacrifice
To offer at the altar of thine eyes ?

Nay, Marguerite, I cannot ; for the soul
That reigns transcendent in the dwelling-place
Of thy fair form, irradiates thy face
With lustre pure as words writ on the scroll
Of God's own law. I would not dare erase
One faintest tracery, although the goal
Which whispered words of love ensured to me
Should be an answering whisper felt by thee.

THE WAY O' THE WORLD.

NELL and I set out together
In the spring—the heyday ;
Nell and I, thro' fickle weather,
Fared afield where cows at tether
Waited for the May-day.

When the birds were all a-feather
Nell and I, like true loves,
Danced thro' sun and summer weather,
Singing all the while together,
Scorning thoughts of new loves.

But when frost had nip't the heather
And each hill and valley
Donned its gown of russet leather,
Nell and Ned went off together,—
I made love to Sallie.

PHILOSOPHY-IN-LITTLE.

A DAY of toil amid the moil
And muddle of the city,
I passed in vain and sordid pain
And worry, more 's the pity !
I had no heart for books or art
Or labor of the scholars,
So crept to bed, with aching head,
And dreamed of dust and dollars.

Upon the lawn, at early dawn,
A robin fluted sweetly,
He sang to me so joyfully
That up I rose all fleetly ;
Then out I went and all day spent
Amid the April greening,—
Came back at night, enamored quite
Of nature and her meaning.

CUPID AND JUSTICE.

THE little God of Love one day
While walking chanced to lose his way,
And being, as the poets say,
Incapable of seeing,
Flung himself prone upon the grass,
To wait until some friend should pass.
And, as he lay, a comely lass
Adown the road came fleeing.

Her face was fair, her temples white,
And tho' her step was soft and light,
She too, alas ! had lost her sight,
And moved a trifle slowly ;
She too, alas ! had lost her way,
And, ever going more astray,
Soon came to where the Love-God lay
Among the grasses lowly.

Then Love uprose, with just a trace
Of mischief on his handsome face,
And said : " My lady, grant me grace
That I appear so stupid ;
But may I beg to know your name ?"
" I am called Justice," said the dame,
Then blushed, as low his answer came :
" And, madam, *I* am Cupid."

He lisped sweet nothings in her ear,
She frowned, yet could not choose but hear ;
And tho' she strove to look severe,

Her heart was in a flurry.

Too late they learned the Fates designed
They nevermore their way should find,

For neither knew the other blind,

And both were in a hurry.

A RONDEAU OF VASSAR.

OH, Vassar girl, who fain would rise
Superior to Love's charming lies ;
You who prefer the themes that be
Modelled on Kant's philosophy ;
Potential ballots in your eyes,

And bridge of nose, judicial, wise—

In fact a very Bridge of Size

And intellectuality,

Oh, Vassar girl !

You 're fair, yet from you Cupid flies

With cramps as though he 'd dined on pies ;

For, *suaviter in modo*, he

Finds you too *fortiter in re*,

And so to lesser culture hies,

Oh, Vassar girl !

EVOLUTION OF THE POET.

WHEN dryads lived and sought to bring
 Ladona to the sparkling spring
 Where shaggy Pan was wont to sit
 And pipe his ditties, poets writ
 With pens plucked from the swelling wing
 Of Pegasus, nor felt the sting
 Hid in the average critic's fling :
Poeta nascitur non fit,
 When dryads lived.

But nowadays the proper thing
 Is *first* to get within the ring,
 And, having made a single hit,
 An ounce of sense,—a grain of wit,—
 Will do the rest ; no need to sing
 “ When dryads lived.”

BALLADE TO A BOOKMAN.

CROTCHETY delver in books,
 Hater of all that is new,
 Seeker of cosiest nooks
 Known to the favorite few,
 Why should you ever ask who
 Fateward defiance hath hurled ?
 Delver in books it is you —
 You who have conquered the world.

Snuffy old fellow, whose looks
Hint of a wig and a queue,
Scorning the cates of the cooks
For a pewter of ale and a stew,
Why should you ever be blue,
Seeing that runnels have purled,
Since the beginning, for you —
You who have conquered the world?

Intimate friend of Horne Tooke's,
Chum of the Wandering Jew,
Rating reformers as "crooks"
And lovers as *enfants perdus*,
Why should you ever pursue
Ways of the folk who are swirled
Into the popular view —
You who have conquered the world?

ENVOI.

Dream, as you ruminate through
Smoke into canopies curled;
Dream, for you 've nothing to do —
You who have conquered the world.

A RONDEAU IN REPLY.

I N fallow fields I long to lie —
A bookman lost in Arcady;
Or, steeped in grasses to the knees,
To follow fast where fancy flees;

Though musty lore and legend die,
I 'd give my conquered world to sigh
An answer to the lullaby
 Hot-hummed by honey-loaden bees
 In fallow fields.

A-dream 'neath circumambient sky,
To list the crow's remoter cry,
 The while the love-begetting breeze
 Flutters the leafy hearts of trees
And turns the heads of foolish rye
 In fallow fields.

BALLADE.

MAIDEN, if within thy breast
 Lurks the trust that thou shalt seize
From life's love the purest, best,
 Quaffing nectar, while the lees
 Mingle not ; upon thy knees
Quickly fall for guidance. Never
 Dally with false dreams that please ;
Love and wine deceive us ever.

Youth, who, at the soft behest
 Of the ruddy wine-cup, ease
And the sense of being blest
 Seekest, know thy destinies
 But await fulfilment ; these
Shall not stay though thou be clever ;

Follows fate where fortune flees ;
Love and wine deceive us ever.

Lover, who, upon the crest
Of the waves of Paphian seas,
Think'st to find ecstatic rest
Mid love's charms and panoplies,
Drown thy dreams *in medias res* ;
Happiness waits on endeavor ;
Joys unearned are miseries ;
Love and wine deceive us ever.

ENVOI.

Youths and maids of all degrees,
Heads must learn though hearts should sever ;
Butterflies have stings of bees ;
Love and wine deceive us ever.

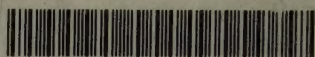
RONDEAU.

IN days of old, when gods divine
Quaffed potent draughts of golden wine
From crystal goblets, and in glee
Sported with dolphins in the sea,
Or strayed beneath the oak and pine,

The poet but waited for a sign,
And through his pen the immortal Nine
Spake all delicious things that be
In days of old.

But now the gods have grown so fine
They keep at home, and not a line
The muses give to you and me ;
But, having come to drinking tea,
Lose brilliance, and so only shine
In days of old.

THE END.



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